

Recovering from the Historic SCU Fire Will Take Aid from Washington

By Supervisor Dave Cortese

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to the thousands of firefighters who fought fearlessly to control the two large fires that consumed nearly 400,000 acres in the eastern part of the County and nearly 87,000 to the south and west in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties near the Santa Clara County line.

I also want to thank Mother Nature. A shift of the wind in the SCU Lightning Complex Fire could have allowed the blaze to move over the ridge of the Diablo Range and into residential areas in county pockets and in San Jose. The SCU Fire is expected to be 100 percent contained by September 17.

The focus locally is now on helping those who were in the path of these devastating fires. In Santa Clara County, attention must be on the ranchers and residents who lost homes, buildings, grazing land for cattle, livestock, vehicles and more in the SCU Fire, and who face an uncertain future.

On September 2, I sent an urgent request to Governor Gavin Newsom asking for his help in adding Santa Clara County to the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration because of the damage caused by the SCU Fire in the County. The SCU Fire is the second largest fire in the state's history and is not yet eligible for FEMA aid although eight other counties were included. State Senator Jim Beall and State Assemblyman Ash Kalra are among those who support my request.

I recently toured the SCU Fire areas in the Diablo Range of the County from San Jose to beyond Lick Observatory to the San Antonio Valley to survey the widespread damage. It was heartbreaking to see that black scorched earth had replaced vibrant grasslands, shrubs and oak trees that provided feed and shelter for deer and other wildlife and 13,471 head of cattle and livelihoods to the ranchers and rural workforce.

An initial damage estimates of the impacted areas of the SCU Fire is \$26 million, including the loss of cattle and the loss of vegetation that feeds them, according to a report from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. This estimate does not include the loss of roads, cabins, barns and other buildings. The report also notes that water quality and quantity will suffer from the fire's impact on the Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs in Santa Clara and Alameda

Counties. Visit my website, supervisorcortese.org, to view a map showing damage to structures.

Santa Clara County needs to be included on the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration so that ranchers and residents can receive federal aid for these losses. For questions, please call my office at 408-299-5030 or email me at dave.cortese@bos.sccgov.org.